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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8784
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 9117
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 8674
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3763
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0307
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 6049
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4859
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: PROGRESS ON PAK-AFGHAN JIRGA; HINTS AT
BREAKTHROUGH ON SIR CREEK, SIACHEN

¶1. (U) Summary: On September 11, Pakistani and Afghan Foreign Ministers agreed to a re-engagement plan between the two countries and to convene a mini-jirga shortly after the Eid holiday (early October). Relations between the two countries had soured after the bombing of the Indian Embassy in Kabul, which Afghan President Hamid Karzai blamed on Pakistani involvement. Looking toward their eastern neighbor India, President Asif Zardari, also speaking to the press September 11, pointed to Sir Creek and Siachen as areas that could be resolved leading to a larger Kashmir deal. End summary.

With Afghanistan
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¶2. (U) Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told the press September 11 that he and Afghan Foreign Minister Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta had developed a "re-engagement plan" for their two countries to improve recently strained relations. The two officials agreed to hold a mini-jirga as a follow-up to the grand jirga that took place last year in Kabul. Although the dates for the mini-jirga have yet to be finalized, it has been announced that it would take place after the Eid holiday (October 2 or 3). This plan is the result of discussions between Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and Afghan President Hamid Karzai in August.

¶3. (U) The two Ministers also agreed to reconvene the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission (dates yet to be determined) and to hold the third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (to be held in November in Islamabad) to focus on bilateral trade and economic cooperation concerns. Additionally, Qureshi and Spanta agreed to meet at the UN General Assembly later this month to continue with the bilateral dialogue. The ministers reported that their respective National Security Advisors would also participate in robust bilateral dialogue to focus on security concerns.

¶4. (U) Relations between the two countries began to sour after the July bombing of the Indian Embassy in Kabul, which Afghan President Hamid Karzai blamed on the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. The Foreign Ministers' re-engagement plan, as well as Karzai's attendance of Zardari's September 9 swearing in, comes on the heels of the recent support by Karzai for U.S. operations in Pakistan and the denouncement of the same operations by Pakistan Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Kayani.

With India
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¶5. (U) President Asif Zardari added September 11, speaking to the press, that he was hopeful that two long pending disputes with India -- Sir Creek and Siachen -- will be resolved very soon. He claimed political leaders across the spectrum would be brought on board on any breakthroughs, naming Pakistan Muslim League-N's Nawaz Sharif, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F's Fazlur Rehman, Awami National Party's Asfundyar Wali Khan, and Muttahida Quami Movement's Altaf Hussain.

¶6. (U) Progress on Kashmir would come if these two other issues could be resolved, Zardari said. "All the possible solutions on Kashmir will be discussed first in the parliamentary committee on Kashmir and then the final solution will be approved by the parliament," he concluded.

PATTERSON